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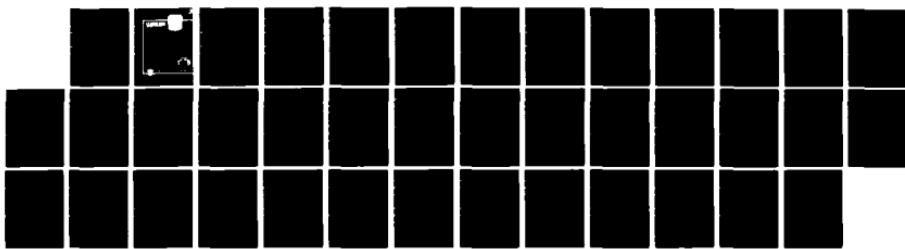
IMPROVING US - SOVIET RELATIONS: UNDERSTANDING THE
SOVIET VIEWPOINT(U) RARMY WAR COLL CRRLTISLE BARRACKS PA
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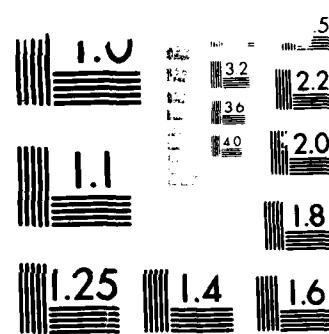
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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

**IMPROVING US - SOVIET RELATIONS: UNDERSTANDING
THE SOVIET VIEWPOINT**

AN INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

by

Lieutenant Colonel Malcolm L. Ogilvie, Jr., USMC

**Ms. Elizabeth Pickering
Project Adviser**

**US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
20 May 1986**

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ABSTRACT

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Lying at the heart of our understanding or more possibly our misunderstanding of the Soviets and their view of the world is the vast difference in their viewpoint from ours. The Soviets simply look at things differently than we do and as a result one cannot expect either their logic, decision processes, or conclusions to match ours given the same set of circumstances. While this phenomenon has generally been identified and discussed throughout our society, I am not sure of the degree to which it has altered the manner in which we actually deal with them. A most serious threat to us and the world as we know it today could arise if both the United States and the Soviet Union develop and follow courses of action which, although genuinely perceived to be in their own best interests, sets these countries on a collision course. When a strategic nuclear exchange begins, the ultimate judgement as to who is right has precious little meaning for any of us. Weapons technology and development have occurred so rapidly that a major misunderstanding or misreading could be disastrous. This paper will delve into this subject by presenting the Soviet perspectives on several elements critical to US - Soviet relations and then discussing these perspectives with the goal of providing insights and means by which our dealings with the Soviets might be altered and tensions between the two countries reduced.

THE SOVIET VIEWPOINT AND US - SOVIET RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Lying at the heart of our understanding or more possibly our misunderstanding of the Soviets and their view of the world is the vast difference in their viewpoint from ours. The Soviets simply look at things differently than we do and as a result one cannot expect either their logic, decision processes, or conclusions to match ours given the same set of circumstances. While this phenomenon has generally been identified and discussed throughout our society, I am not sure of the degree to which it has altered the manner in which we actually deal with them. Although policies and viewpoints presented by US public officials have not always been consistent, they must be considered to have been made in what was perceived at the time of issuance to be in the best interests of the United States. Conversely, it can reasonably be assumed that Soviet policies and viewpoints have been generated in a manner that would benefit their interests. A most serious threat to us and the world as we know it today could arise if both the United States and the Soviet Union develop and follow courses of action which, although genuinely perceived to be in their own best interests, sets these countries on a collision course. When a strategic nuclear exchange begins, the ultimate judgement as to who is right has precious little meaning for any of us. Weapons technology and development have occurred so rapidly that a major misunderstanding or misreading could be disastrous. The situations and events which led to the Korean War and the Cuban missile crisis must be avoided. If we make the assumption (that I would hope could be extended to both sides) that a nuclear war

could be in neither nation's best interests, we can allow ourselves to take one step back from an intentional strategic nuclear conflict to the potential power struggle being played by the two superpower nations today.

It is within this context that I would like to delve into this subject further by presenting the Soviet perspectives on several elements critical to US - Soviet relations and then discuss these perspectives with the goal of providing insights and means by which we might alter our dealings with the Soviets and possibly reduce tensions between the two countries.

To accomplish this, this paper is divided into two sections. In the first section the Soviet viewpoint is offered in the following areas: Soviet history, the Soviet mentality, the Soviet role in the world, human rights, and some Soviet views on US - Soviet relations. All of the above areas are discussed from the Soviet perspective except the part on the Soviet mentality which is based upon the writing of an expelled Soviet scholar who discusses critical differences in the very structure of Soviet society which causes them to think remarkably different from Western societies.

With that one exception, these Soviet viewpoints can thus be considered to represent either Soviet party line propaganda or truly another way of looking at our world. At a minimum, the Soviets provide at least an intellectually stimulating and at times logical alternatives to Western viewpoints.

Having thus laid out the Soviet viewpoint in Section 1, Section 2 discusses and analyzes these viewpoints with the idea of either modifying our policies or learning how to deal more effectively with

Soviet policies. The ultimate goal of this paper is to seek out several keys which may open doors to better US - Soviet relations.

SECTION I - THE SOVIET VIEWPOINT

Soviet Historical Perspective

The history of the world as seen by the Soviets varies significantly from Western versions but provides interesting insight into their global view. Two historical themes that dominate Soviet thinking are their overwhelming concern for safeguarding their homeland and the perception of themselves as "saviors of Western Civilization."

After numerous wars and occupations, the Russians became convinced that the only way they could protect their homeland would be to take control of those nations who either made war on them or those which could not prevent foreign armies from passing through their nation to make war on Russia. During its early history Russia was invaded and dominated for lengthy periods of time by Mongol hordes. This long Mongol control significantly restricted the normal development of their own governmental institutions especially relative to their European peers. Their tremendous suffering and periodic military success against these invaders led Russia to consider itself to be the "...savior of European Civilization." The major Soviet participation in the defeat of three hostile forces all bent upon the domination of Europe (Napoleon in 1813 and German forces in WWI and WWII) was achieved only at a great cost in Russian lives and resources. Such events could reasonably be expected to further their historical paranoia about the security of their homeland and their self-perception as a European savior.

The Russians have long felt themselves surrounded by hostile nations. It is most interesting to note that in the 16th century the Queen of England was strongly requested to join a European boycott of the transfer of military technology to the Russians by the King of Poland. The Polish King considered the Russian Tzar to be "the enemy of all liberty under the heavens" and further stated that only in military technology did he possess an advantage against the overall Russian military superiority. (Has history repeated itself?)

Events preceding World War II solidified the Soviet Marxist view of capitalist nations. Left out of the negotiating process which led to the Agreements at Versailles and Munich, the Soviets signed a Non-Aggression Pact with Germany to gain time to allow themselves to prepare to do battle with the modern and well equipped German military machine. In the three year period from the time Germany invaded the Soviet Union until the landing of the Allies at Normandy, the Soviet front was the only really significant counter to German expansion. The Soviets virtually pleaded with their allies to open a second front in Europe to relieve the pressure on them but for a variety of reasons, it did not happen. The Soviet view is that the second front was purposely delayed so that they would bear the greatest burden of the war and this position has some support even in Western writings. The final accounting of the war tends to support this thesis. The Soviets ultimately accounted for 85 percent of Germany's casualties and 75 percent of their loss of resources while themselves suffering 20 million dead and the loss of one-third of their own nation's wealth. These memories remain in the forefront of Soviet thinking.¹

The Soviet Mentality

A key to the understanding of the Soviet viewpoint lies in understanding the Soviet mentality. Dmitry Mikheyev offered interesting insight into this subject in a paper prepared for an international studies convention in early 1985. Mikheyev was a doctoral candidate in physics at Moscow University during the late 1960's who also served in the Soviet military and was expelled in 1979 after serving six years in jail as a political prisoner. Mikheyev identifies three different codes or sets of rules which exist within a society to guide its members. The Super Code is the most general set of rules which relates actions of society to fundamental religious beliefs. Down one level is the Societal Code which encompasses all official laws and guidelines placed upon society by its governing body. Finally, the Functional Code identifies the "street" rules which members of a society have come to acknowledge as the actual way they must conduct themselves to best survive in their specific environment. While these three different codes will likely conflict in some aspects within most any society, the degree to which they conflict will have a profound affect on the individual. In the United States there are no significant differences between the Super and Societal Codes. Although a certain amount of cheating and lying may take place within the Functional Code, the three codes nevertheless represent a reasonably consistent group of values and standards within the United States. As a consequence they do not normally offer contradicting input to the psyche of the society's members. In the Soviet Union, the church is supported as long as their dogma does not conflict with official Communist dogma. Consequently, it does not provide the Soviet people with a Super Code but is instead

folded into the Societal Code. The Societal Code is dictated by a variety of official institutions, which all have the development of the New Communist Man as their primary objective. This Man is expected to be the staunch supporter of the Communist ethic and be guided in his daily life by Socialist law. The Soviet Functional Code includes the influence provided by the family as well as from "the street."²

Soviet children generally experience what we would consider a normal childhood until the age of about 10 years old. They are exposed to a variety of literary heroes who are frequently guided by the Christian Super Code and they are introduced to the relativity of truth. They learn that teachers, who consistently push the concept of the New Communist Man on them (Communist ethic and Socialist law), may not always be their friends and need not always be told the truth especially as it pertains to friends and family. Family members will teach children to be faithful to them rather than party members or others in the society. Members of the teenagers' peer group assume a dominant role in guiding their everyday lives much as they do in other societies but there is one key difference. Most teenagers find themselves trapped between a world of adults and peers while Soviet teenagers face two different adult worlds (one led by their family, the other by their teachers and Soviet institutions) as well as the world of their peers. As might be expected, teenagers must be capable of transferring quickly between these contradictory worlds depending on where they are. The majority of teenagers who go either directly to work or enter the military (an estimated 90 percent of all high school graduates) must quickly learn to demonstrate at least a minimum level of acknowledgment of the communist ethic and Socialist law and also accept the

undesirable Functional Code of the adult world. Those going on to further education will be protected from this potentially harsh transition and will recognize, over time, the importance of at least outwardly accepting the official Societal Code. Several significant points which should be made relative to the official and unofficial education of the Soviet citizen. One is that he will only tell the truth and act kindly towards "friends" and the definition of the term friends may be very narrow indeed. To a great degree, anyone not considered to be a friend is viewed as an enemy. Thus lying to someone other than a friend is not really a question of right or wrong but one of lifelong indoctrination, priorities and survival. The second significant point is the ultimate effect on an individual when they find it necessary to adjust to values which may not be those they feel most closely represents their own. This is especially harsh in the instance where an individual must accept values which fall below those which they would otherwise select. Thus most of the people are humbled and experience both apprehension and a feeling of wrongdoing as they take measures necessary to exist in an environment that is considered to be essentially hostile both physically and psychologically except for their own inner family circle. From the Soviet government's viewpoint, belief in the inherent evil of man is essential for justifying the tight control over virtually every phase of Soviet life. The internal acceptance of such a need even by the political opposition (albeit limited) coupled with the long and bitter history of protecting their homeland, generates submission to tight governmental control and overall priority to the continuity and integrity of the state.³

The Soviet leaders, on the other hand, live in a slightly different world. They must accept and outwardly support the societal Code. Strength is seen as the key ingredient in personal advancement as well as maintaining the integrity of the state. Since truth is considered to be relative, all Soviet citizens possess some measure of understanding the truth. The test lies in the ability of one individual to dominate the group and thus have his view of truth become the accepted version. Once a version of truth is determined, there is little room for dissension because if you are not supporting it, you are an enemy. There is absolutely no room for vacillating nor any observable middle position. Thus a structure is created with one leader and a few close supporters at the top and the rest of the citizens down below. Such a system provides for the smooth flow of policy and order which ensures the continuity, integrity and strength of the Soviet Union.⁴

Soviet Role in the World

Current editions of the United States Military Posture and Soviet Military Power paint a clear picture that the Soviets seek a dominant role in the world arena, cite Soviet reliance on military power as the primary means of projecting their power and influence about the world and use historical examples to prove their propensity to consider using and actually employing military power to attain their international political objectives. The Soviets can alternately be viewed as seeking to support their relative position in the world as any other acknowledged powerful nation could be expected to do while also endorsing their particular form of government. Their history gives them ample justification for being deeply concerned about the integrity of their borders. They strongly wish to avoid the suffering, losses, and

deprivation that they have witnessed this century and above all else they intend to protect their homeland with large forward deployed ground forces. Substantial control over potentially dangerous or weak bordering neighbors has long been part of their protective strategy by providing buffer states around their homeland. The structure of their Navy, although large, differs greatly from that of the United States. Its overall missions are generally viewed, even by most Western sources, as largely defensive in nature. The Soviet capability to project power and forces rapidly and at long distances into a hostile environment is limited. They have no major aircraft carriers and but three small VSTOL Aircraft carriers. Their total Naval Infantry force amounts to about the size of one Marine Amphibious Brigade (16,000 personnel) and those forces are spread among their four fleets. Their support for revolutionary causes has been largely offered in the form of financial aid or security assistance and relatively small numbers of Soviet military troops and advisors are deployed outside the immediate border areas of the Soviet Union.

Glancing about their borders they perceive an extremely hostile world around them. To their west and south is a strong forward-deployed North Atlantic Treaty Organization facing them including approximately 300,000 US troops in spite of Soviet participation in a treaty guaranteeing the integrity of those borders and renouncing force as a means of settling disputes. To their east lies China, the most populous nation in the world with whom they have long and often violently been at odds with. Also to their east lies another 40,000 forward deployed US forces in South Korea and many thousands more in Japan and the Phillipines. They see Japan in a position to control the three major

sea lanes leading from their eastern ports and their Navy seriously restricted in both the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans due to geography and weather. The Soviets face a wide variety of hostile forces on their borders. They see almost one-half of the US military forward deployed in Europe and Asia and a soon-to-be, 600-ship US Navy bristling with offensive, force projecting power. At the heart of this 600-ship Navy are 15 aircraft carrier battle groups, four battleship surface action groups, 100 attack submarines, 10 underway replenishment groups and an updated amphibious lift capability. The carrier battle groups comprise both the cutting edge and the heart of an offensive assault capability. Associated with this strike capability is a projected capability to simultaneously lift one Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) and one Marine Amphibious Brigade (MAB) (three MAB's equal one MAF), a total of about 65,000 Marines. Supplementing this capability is the development of the Maritime Prepositioned Ship (MPS) program which provides for three additional MAB's to fall in on prepositioned equipment at positions east, west, and south of the Soviet Union. The Soviets see major threats from three directions and an aggressive, offensive oriented US forces forward deployed against them.

Georgi Arbatov provided a convincing response to the charge that the Soviets are seeking to spread its brand of communism and eventually achieve world domination. Arbatov, the Director of the Institute of USA and Canadian Studies in Moscow who has long been considered a chief advisor to the Kremlin on US affairs, states that that idea was supported by the leftist followers of Trotsky although it was soundly rejected by a majority. It is said that Lenin felt that advocating revolution in a foreign country would be "a complete break with

Marxism." In the 1930's the Soviet Union sought to establish better relations with its neighbors and in support of this objective it again denied all intentions of imperialistic expansion, while at the same time advocating total disarmament. In 1961 at the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Khrushchev firmly stated that an expansion of Soviet influence could take place within an atmosphere of "peaceful coexistence."⁵

Soviet View of Human Rights

It is perhaps in the area of human rights where Soviet actions seem so repressive from a Western viewpoint. Arbatov, in his book The Soviet Viewpoint, stressed the point that the Soviets have a "...deep and long-standing commitment to human rights" but by Western standards, no statement could be more contradictory. His development of the belief that the Soviet Union is more advanced than the United States in the area of social rights is quite interesting. It is only for the cause of social rights that their Revolution is said to have occurred along with the successful defense of their homeland from foreign intervention. The Soviet approach to human rights is perceived by them to be fresh and wide in scope and incorporating rights disregarded by most societies. The key human rights are perceived by the Soviets to be the right to have a job, to be free from hunger, to receive a free education, to have lodging, to receive free medical treatment and to live in a safe and secure environment. The Soviet system has provided those "rights" and generally satisfied its citizens. Per capita real consumption improved threefold in the 30-year period starting in 1950. Steady and genuine improvement in the standard of living have occurred since the 1917

Revolution and Soviet citizens will uniformly agree that they are better off than ever before. Although their constitution also affords them the standard political rights such as the freedom of speech, religion and the right to gather, they are interpreted differently than are those same rights in most Western nations. The justification for this difference may lie in Mikheyev's paper titled, A Model of Soviet Mentality. Mikheyev theorized that within the Soviet mentality, people are considered to be "basically greedy, selfish, sly, deceitful, and treacherous" and that even political opposition within the Soviet Union resolutely believes that without a tight governmental grip, individuals would steal, bribe, and kill to a point where the government would ultimately have no control over its citizens. They consider their society to be relatively free of murder, rape, robberies, unemployment welfare cases, and drugs. They point to some negative statistics in Western nations relative to those same problems and claim them to be typical of a capitalistic society. They look with near glee at the growing US drug problem. Twenty million Americans are estimated to use cocaine with 5 million being addicted and 5,000 using it each day for the first time. Similarly distressing statistics exist for the use of heroin and marijuana comprising an illegal drug industry estimated at \$100 billion a year, up \$10 billion each year since 1978. Another \$100 billion price tag is identified with the productivity lost as a result of illegal drug abuse. The Soviets claim that any nation that permits a drug abuse problem of that degree to exist is clearly not mindful of the human rights of the members of that society. A former drug agent who counsels industry on limiting drug abuse stated that "cocaine symbolizes power, wealth and success," and the Soviets would further state that it

is a typical consequence in a money grabbing, corporate driven capitalist society such as the United States.⁶

Although a number of well known and highly publicized dissidents have not been allowed to leave the Soviet Union, about 271,000 have left since 1971. When Americans claim that the Soviets are a repressive, inhumane society, the Soviets turn to our treatment of American Indians, minorities and particularly Blacks throughout our history. They look at our growing crime figures and the ever present dangers in our cities. They point to the civil disorders, protests and unrest which are frequently reported upon in the US media, the thousands of bankrupt farmers and businesses and the growing number of homeless people in all of our major cities. They contrast that with the thousands of corporate elite millionaires who have earned those millions off the backs of the disadvantaged people mentioned above. They feel their human rights policies have struck at the heart of genuine human needs while we have ignored those same basic rights and concentrated on issues less important to the continuity and integrity of a nation.⁷

Soviet Viewpoint of US - Soviet Relations

Arbatov states that the main problem between the United States and the Soviet Union is not one of understanding each other but instead the basic attitude taken by the United States. The fact that the United States delayed, until 1933, official recognition of the government created by the Russian Revolution of 1917 when most other nations had recognized it by 1924 particularly irks them. The Soviets feel that the United States simply could not and would not accept the reality of their existence and that in fact many Americans still feel that very same way to this day.

Another strong Soviet view is that they see the United States as trying to bring about a fundamental change in the structure of society both in their words and actions. US linkage of human rights type issues with other nonrelated issues is one good example of this. The activities of Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe are considered as outright subversive activities intended to cause internal unrest and dissatisfaction and ultimately change the fiber of their national structure. In Soviet eyes many Americans never wanted to accept their existence in the first place and now that the passage of time has obliged us to accept them, we are taking direct measures to do our best to get rid of them.

Soviet professionals dedicated to the study of the United States (referred to as Soviet Americanists) see two distinct policies exhibited by US political leaders towards the Soviet Union. One is an aggressive stance which would consider military intervention against the Soviets while the other takes more of a pacifist approach. The confusing and sometimes unexplainable changes in US policy are according to Arbatov "inherent in the very nature of capitalism." The Soviets believe the US foreign policy towards them is not constant or made in advance but rather one element in the continuous battles for US political power with the final guidance dictated by the winner. They see enemies of the Soviet Union discouraging US detente with the Soviets for both personal and economic reasons. They see military leaders committed to expansion and modernization of their forces, corporate officials associated with the military-industrial complex (MIC) seeking lucrative defense contracts, special interest groups such as Zionist Groups crying repression and influential individuals committed to a cold war posture

through their past media presentations. All these forces are believed to be working against the Soviets and a peaceful period of detente.⁸

While much of what has been presented so far is pure Soviet propaganda, there are a number of Soviet viewpoints which should be seriously considered. Are they evil liars plotting our downfall or victims of Western anti-Communist paranoia? The answer undoubtedly lies somewhere in between. The real value in considering the Soviet Viewpoint lies in the development and conduct of our relations with the Soviets.

SECTION II
US - SOVIET RELATIONS

The previous section has offered the Soviet viewpoint in several areas critical to US--Soviet relations. In the section which follows I will analyze aspects of those same areas with the purpose of discerning ways in which the Soviet viewpoints and perspectives presented can lead us to new or alternate policies that could improve US--Soviet relations.

Understanding the Soviet Mind

The prior lengthy discussion of the Soviet mentality provides a basis for understanding a constant impediment to US--Soviet discussions and relations. Not only are Soviet ideals and principles vastly different from those of the United States but their thought process is also significantly different. Dmitry Mikheyev's development of the Soviet mentality should initially evoke considerable sympathy for the plight of the Soviet people. Such sympathy must be avoided and should play no role in our relations with the Soviets because their people are relatively satisfied with their present form of government control and hardly ripe for a change. Although it could be said that the Soviet people simply are not aware of what they are missing due to the closed nature of their society, there are some who say that, regardless of the genuine absence of many individual rights, the relative security provided by the Soviet system is so ingrained in their mind set that the average citizen would be helpless in a free and competitive society. Lacking fundamental religious doctrine clear positions of good and bad, fair and unfair, and right and wrong do not exist. Truth is a viewpoint relative to one's own interests and subject to change. A fundamental

contrast in the US and Soviet societies exists in regard to the fundamental relationship between the individual and the state. In the United States the government is run by and for its individual citizens while in the Soviet Union the citizens exist to further the state. With the main goal being the integrity and continuity of the Soviet state, all other matters clearly "take a back seat." Thus the traditional US relationship between logic and reason and Judean-Christian principles is nonexistent in the Soviet mind. Truth relates to the perceived best interests of the Soviet Union as specifically interpreted by the current leader and thus arguments offered to the Soviets based upon fairness and righteousness may fall on minds that do not possess a basis for understanding what is being said. The success of Soviet leaders is in large part due to their extreme and consistent devotion to the Communist ethic and Socialist law. They develop and maintain their power through rigid domination. They view exterior states as either friends or enemies and rigidly remain fixed on the continuity and primacy of the Soviet State. The clear recognition of these elements of the Soviet mentality are absolutely essential to any successful Soviet negotiations.

Acceptance of the Soviets As An Established Power

Prior to any discussion of US--Soviet relations one must first address the national goals which are in some way associated with the Soviets. While a comprehensive look at this question is well beyond the scope of this paper, one central issue must be addressed.

That issue is whether the United States can alone serve as the protection and guarantor of democratic principles worldwide. While we now are likely to receive concurrence on the position that we cannot

shoulder all the world's burdens (this has not always seemed to be the case), the next question to be answered is which ones we do shoulder and what we do about all the others. Interest and realities must guide our policies. While we would like the Soviets to honor our human rights principles, any overt attempt to push them in that direction would be construed by the Soviets as a subversive and outrageous act of interference and could potentially precipitate a strategic nuclear exchange which is clearly in the interest of neither nation. Other fundamental wrongs which ought to be righted are the captivity of the western most Soviet Republics and the nations of Eastern Europe but any overt interference in the control of those nations could also trigger a nuclear conflagration. In some eyes perhaps the most dangerous and fundamental "wrong" that we face today is the existence of the Soviet Union itself. Historically, we have denied her existence (for 17 years) and attributed to her the very worst of all forms of communist evils. Even today there appear to be those both inside and outside our government that support forcible changes in the Soviet system. While such an occurrence would certainly be in our interest, it is not supported by reality. The Soviet Union is a major power whose military strength threatens our Allies and whose nuclear weapons threaten the world. Although the United States and the world may previously have faced more capable and aggressive foes, none have held the potential to cause more destruction and havoc than does the Soviet Union and her nuclear weapons. With the stakes so high we must carefully move to create an environment most advantageous to our interest. How we make such gains is the responsibility of our leaders and the foreign policy that they direct. Any measures taken which run counter to Soviet

interests must be carefully weighed against the likely benefit accruable to our interests, any possible loss in our ability to maintain an open and continuous dialogue with the Soviets, and obviously the risk of triggering a nuclear war. We need not capitulate on our ideals, merely analyze carefully where our main effort should be placed to best achieve the desired results. Often repeated Soviet rhetoric which labels periods of detente as opportunities to achieve their desired results through periods of peace and Khrushchev's famous "We shall bury you" remark can be reasonably construed to imply that war fighting is not feasible and results must be gained in other ways. From even a Western viewpoint, one may discern some rationality in that thought process. We must continue to strive to do the same thing only more tactfully and skillfully. Therefore as much as we may disagree with their system and some of the behavior they exhibit, it is essential to understand that major changes to either their structure or their behavior, through challenging or aggressive actions on our part, are just not likely to occur. Their history and their mentality tend to reject any such attempt. While they can be expected to respond unfavorably and even quite negatively to outside aggressiveness, they do understand and recognize the existence of force and power. While the existence of a strong NATO may deter them from taking actions of which we would disapprove, the over-aggressiveness of a strong NATO could precipitate undesirable and destabilizing actions.

Although the prior discussion of Soviet viewpoints will certainly not cause a sudden change in heart and make one believe that the Soviets are in fact "right," those discussions should have led one to see that the Soviet system is not some bastardized or illegal government but

rather one that has evolved over a history far longer than ours into its present form based upon a wide variety of events and circumstances. While no Westerner is likely to view the Soviet system as being the "right" one for any or all of mankind, one might perceive that their system may genuinely be considered as being "right" by them for their people right now. Consequently any dealings with the Soviets that allude to the correctness of their system and the manner in which they manage their government and conduct their human rights is perceived as a direct challenge and threat to their existence. Since they have been consistently threatened throughout their history they can be expected to respond as they always have, by becoming more paranoid, strengthening their military capability and assuming tighter control over their subjects.

Developing International Order

Georgi Arbatov in his book The Soviet Viewpoint gave a very interesting answer when asked if he agreed that international behavior is becoming less controllable and more chaotic. His response was that "We in the Soviet Union believe that national sovereignty and equality among nations are necessary preconditions for peace and international stability." He goes on to express the thought that upon this foundation of sovereignty and equality a new international order could be established with control and authority resting not with one nation or group of nations but with an organization like the United Nations which could guarantee this collective security. Such a guarantee would allow nations to buy more "butter" and less "guns" and achieve a closer cooperation among all nations. Various levels of punishment could be directed at any nation which violates these new

principles of international law, up to and including collective measures. Although it is extremely difficult for Americans to swallow Arbatov's thoughts about sovereignty and equality, especially in light of our view of Soviet behavior, his ideas do provide both a logical and reasonable line of thought.⁹

Aggressive, unilateral military actions taken by any nation threaten peace and when those nations are militarily strong, such action can be extremely destabilizing. In the quest for military and political power and prestige, a unilateral action will often trigger successive counteractions. The recent military moves by the Soviets, Cubans, and Vietnamese are examples of such destabilizing actions. The Soviets would similarly view our actions in Vietnam and Grenada as similarly destabilizing. While each nation undoubtedly could present some form of justification, such actions tend to heighten tensions and risks to world peace. If such actions are allowed to continue it is inevitable that two major opposing powers will ultimately come face to face with one another, seriously endangering world peace. Instability is an international danger and should therefore be considered an international responsibility. While the thoughts presented by Arbatov on this issue are certainly not original and may represent little more than superficial propaganda efforts, they do lie at the heart of the effort needed to keep world peace. Current weapons technology makes any war capable of causing a Third World War and potentially destroying the entire world. Only recently has such a danger presented itself to the world and the collective world should respond to it, ideally through the United Nations. While the United Nations performs a wide variety of useful functions, the only truly critical one is the security of the

world as we know it. The United Nations should enforce stability upon the world by guaranteeing the current international boundaries against outside interference. A truly international United Nations military force could be established based upon a formula combining population and Gross National Product. This joint United Nations force would be directed into any troublespot to bring about a cease fire, restore the original borders and allow time for negotiations to settle the issues. This would be an immediate and automatic response requiring only some level of majority support to bring about this United Nations effort and no veto power would be held by any nation. International disputes would be handled within the World Court structure. Obviously such a process was intended within the original design of the United Nations charter but rapidly was diluted for a variety of reasons. It may not ever be possible for nations to give up that small measure of their sovereignty necessary to allow such a system to function, but it may be the only way that we can reasonably expect to secure and guarantee long term world peace. It is just too much to expect that nations seeking to further their interests, wealth and prestige will not upon occasion overlap similar concerns of another nation. The resulting conflict that could ensue would not be nearly as likely to occur if a United Nations force was prepared and capable of restoring international borders and actively maintaining world order. If such an effort could reduce the current world wide defense spending by even 10 or 20 percent, the "freeing" of such an amount of money would be able to have a remarkable impact on pressing domestic problems facing every nation.

Recognizing the Soviet Role in the World

There is no doubt in my mind that the Soviet Union does seek a dominant position in world politics, support revolutionary causes which are compatible with their political system and take advantage of situations that arise to advance her interests. Frankly it would be surprising if a major power did not do so and perhaps we could understand Soviet actions more clearly if we viewed them in terms of their national interests rather than some inherent predilection associated with their political system. The United States has faced far more aggressive enemies in this century and two are currently allies. The Soviets do have some deep historical scars that border on paranoia concerning the security of their homeland. I believe that they do indeed perceive a hostile world around them which may appear to them to be getting even more hostile. Their massive conventional ground forces and even their invasion of Afghanistan may be recognized (but not justified) as directly reflecting those fears. Their ground forces are certainly far in excess of those necessary for security alone but that again may reflect even further the actual level of their fears. East European nations provide the Soviets with a buffer which they have historically sought while at the same time also constituting a drain on Soviet resources and capital. The Soviets are clearly aware of the dangers of nuclear war and also of the complications of conventional warfare even against scattered groups of rebels as in Afghanistan. I frankly see no realistic national interest in a Soviet move into Western Europe when they have little to gain and so much at risk. It is hard to imagine them crossing the international border and essentially ensuring themselves a full declaration of war from NATO especially in light of

the fact that they have permitted West Berlin to remain under Western control deep within Soviet Block borders and have otherwise avoided confrontations with the United States in Cuba, Vietnam and the Middle East. While the Soviets have developed strong land forces to protect their homeland, they have not created powerful sea forces to project their power to distant locations. The realignment of their military forces towards a larger force projecting and sustainable naval force would probably constitute a greater threat to the United States than does their present configuration.

In evaluating the relative intensity of four basic mutual interest (defense of homeland, economic, world order and promotion of values) it is interesting to note that Nuechterlein in America Overcommitted felt that only world order interests constitute a genuine grounds for intense US--Soviet competition. Economically, the Soviets are relatively self-sufficient while having only energy and mineral resources and military hardware to offer for export. Ideologically, the Soviet model has clearly lost its appeal to nations who are reasonably developed or have experienced some form of democracy. Only in a small number of Third World Nations has Communism been viewed as a means of achieving rapid growth through a tightly controlled government and in the majority of those cases the existing situation was bad enough to allow Communism to be seen as an improvement. In the defense of homeland interest, neither country realistically seeks to control the other territory although the forward based US troops and equipment in Western Europe and the forward based US Naval Forces to include Maritime Propositioned Ships probably constitute a fairly high level of genuine danger to Soviet leaders.¹⁰

Having thus reduced the major conflict of interests to that of world order, one may perceive a classic case of superpowers vying for prestige and international power. While this still offers great opportunity for direct friction in US--Soviet Relations, it should tend to narrow the scope of potential conflict. Based upon this analysis, many Soviet moves could be viewed in a different light and potential improvement in our relations could lie within our grasp. Soviet conventional forces may just be their response to a perceived buildup and improvement of enemy capability around them. The Soviets may just be as we are, seeking a level of nuclear parity acceptable to them. Soviet interest in Third World nations may just be an attempt at gaining friends more than for territorial expansion. Could not the US and her allies allow the Soviets to improve her relative international status at little actual risk? Such status would not represent the acceptance of Soviet beliefs or actions but rather the reality of the World situation. We have (hopefully) accepted them as a legitimate government; now we should recognize the power that they possess. They should be a player in any international affairs which might concern them. Their involvement in the Middle-East enigma is a good example. They have an interest in it as well as close ties with nations involved in it. It has been said by some that the Middle-East problem will never be solved without Soviet involvement. Why not include them? Increased opportunities to talk and negotiate with the Soviets can at worst give us greater insight into what makes them tick. At best it may satisfy their deep desire for recognition and respect as a world power and lead to a reduction of world tensions.

While deterrence and the potential use of force are essential elements of our foreign policy, the manner in which we apply those elements deserves review. There appears to be a widespread belief that if the Soviets wanted to assault into Western Europe we would be particularly hard pressed to sustain a solid defensive posture and we would be obliged to resort to the use of theatre nuclear weapons in an attempt to stem the Soviet attack. It is presumably for just such an option that the United States has declared that it might be the first to employ nuclear weapons (the Soviets have renounced first use). The Soviets feel that any use of nuclear weapons will automatically result in a higher escalation of the conflict. Based upon that rationale, it is not our conventional forces but our nuclear forces that actually provide the deterrence. Are the Soviets in primarily a defensive posture and do alternative strategies exist rather than the stationing of approximately 300,000 troops in Western Europe at an estimated cost of \$90 billion? I feel that to a great extent Soviet paranoia about their defense has led them to their present posture and that other strategies do exist.

One step would be the mutual reduction of forces along the East and West German border. Gradual reductions in the size of the forces facing each would appear to be of mutual benefit to both nations. Such reductions would ultimately require the deployment of US forces back to the States where they are not easily redeployed. To compensate for this, agreements could be negotiated that would limit the forward deployment of designated Soviet units within their Warsaw Pact "buffer" nations. Violations of such limits by major troop units should be verifiable by national intelligence assets and constitute a clearly

identifiable violation which would trigger specific NATO mobilization responses. A secondary benefit of such a plan would be to provide Eastern European nations with more breathing room. A second strategy would still require the maintenance of some level of NATO combat forces forward but would rely to a much greater degree upon weapon technology to achieve deterrence.

Defensive-oriented weapons systems (like the neutron bomb) that could either be forward deployed or rapidly available which would be able to inflict serious damage on specific elements of attacking forces would, when combined with a flexible yet stubborn and mobile defense by NATO combat forces, constitute a credible deterrence. Any unilateral reduction in NATO forces that is not matched by corresponding reductions in forward deployed Soviet forces would present a significant propaganda opportunity for the West. Large and rapid reductions would be foolish but slow and steady counter-reductions by both sides seem to be worthy of the attempt. Small reductions in US forces can be accomplished relatively easily through the modification of replacement factors and the placement of selective noncritical combat support units in a cadre status.

Human Rights

Human rights from a world viewpoint is a relative issue. The meaning and interpretation of human rights in the Soviet Union is so contrary to our Western ideals that our natural tendency is to bluntly refuse to accept their statements and then take steps to correct what we consider to be something that is fundamentally wrong. The problem with taking overt actions is that they are perceived as a threat to the integrity of the Soviet system. If we assume that the Soviet people are

essentially satisfied and believe in their version of human rights, we find ourselves essentially setting foreign policy on the grounds of a relatively small number of well publicized political dissidents. National foreign policy must rise above even the interests of a relatively few to the interest of the nation as a whole. Human rights can be considered to be a relative issue in that one's perception of them depends upon one's viewpoint. To an individual citizen of a nation, the relative value of his nation's human rights depends on the history of that nation and other known alternative human rights standards. Nations which have experienced improvements of their human rights (regardless of at what relative position they started) are not likely to be highly dissatisfied as long as they are not aware of other better alternatives. Conversely, a nation with a relatively high yet constant set of human rights standards may be particularly displeased with their situation if a more desirable set of standards are known to them. While communist regimes generally place the importance of the individual (and his human rights) below that of the state, poor human rights records need not necessarily be associated with communist nations. I would propose that human rights were relatively worse within previous pro-US Governments which controlled Cuba, Iran and the Philippines than within the Peoples' Republic of China.

The point is that the United States is not likely to be effective in bluntly imposing its own brand of human rights upon every nation in the same fashion. To do so with the Soviets has the effect of defensively retrenching them even further while also stifling the dialogue necessary to keep this world in one piece. While we should still treasure our human rights principles and hold them out for others

to see, we must tactfully and cautiously seek the best time and place to successfully influence other people and nations.

CONCLUSION

Those who foresee some combination of military, political and economic pressure bringing the Soviet Union to her knees are mistaken and are only worsening our predicament. The Soviets react to military pressure by making themselves stronger. In spite of the inherent and obvious limitations in their political and economic structure, they are both currently stable. Politically they clearly have the support of their people and a few Allies and their principle purpose is not simply to oppose the West because they actually do believe that their way is "right." The Soviets are different but not irrational and their foreign policy has exhibited greater actual consistency than has ours. We must recognize the relative position of world power that they have attained and deal with that reality. We must recognize that although a position of strength is a necessary prerequisite to deal with the Soviets, the aggressive use of military, political or economic force against them may not only be ineffective but rather cause a negative and destabilizing backlash. We must consider that the Soviets too seek to negotiate from a position of strength and that if we can't agree on a mutual position of parity, a destabilizing military escalation is inevitable. We must consider that the Soviets might not really be an aggressive and marauding bear but rather a cornered and threatened bear. Their WWII losses (fifty times our casualties) and suffering may justify their paranoia about their need for military strength and protection of their homeland. While the Soviets are strong and stable now, they have some fatal chinks in their armor that seriously threaten their future. The desire among her citizens for increased personal freedoms and a higher standard of living is quite likely to someday conflict with their rigid

government structure. An increase in nationalistic sentiment among Soviet minorities (who will soon collectively constitute a Soviet majority) and satellite nations is inevitable. The restrictive and closed nature of Soviet society limits their likelihood of attaining much needed technological breakthroughs and the technological gap with Western nations may not only remain unchanged but it may widen. The Soviet economy will continue to stagnate and the internal pressure which will rise if the Chinese experiment with capitalism is successful will be unbearable. (Their fear and dislike for the Chinese may exceed their distaste for the West.) Soviet surrogates will sooner or later seek a better model to emulate. The contrasts between East and West Berlin, North and South Korea and most Soviet styled nations and the Western world are overwhelming and dramatic. Information and the free flow of ideas are the arch enemies of Communism that will eventually lay the basis for its downfall. Certainly nations will continue to grasp the Soviet model, but it will be largely out of desperation. Unless the West can underwrite and guarantee the sound economic development of every emerging nation, some will certainly be drawn to them. But the inevitable flow of ideas and information and time will ultimately change what we are nearly powerless to change now, without grievous danger to our entire existence. The worst thing that we can do now would be to overpressure them, challenge them or call their bluff without good reason. We will win by default if we are patient. Although the handwriting is written clearly on the wall, there is nothing more dangerous than a cornered animal, particularly the Russian Bear.

ENDNOTES

1. Berend D. Bruins, "Understanding the Soviet Union," Naval Institute Proceedings, September 1984, pp. 66-71.
2. Dmitry Mikheyev, "A Model of Soviet Mentality," Paper prepared for delivery at the 26th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Washington, D.C., March 5-9, 1985.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Georgi Arbatov and Willem Oltmans, The Soviet Viewpoint, p. 18.
6. Ibid., p. 144.
7. Stephen Cohen, Sovieticus, American Perceptions and Soviet Realities, p. 27.
8. Morton Schwartz, Soviet Perceptions of the United States, p. 127.
9. Arbatov and Oltmans, p. 38.
10. Donald Nuechterlein, America Overcommitted, p. 177.

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